14: Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1917
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

the reasons for our visit) we called at his house, only to find from the present ecclesiastical authorities that on his death his Easter Island collection had been dispersed and lost.

No form of writing is known in the South Seas, and various unsatisfactory attempts have been made to decipher the signs. Here again no hope was given to us in England that it would be possible at this date to recover the art, and we found that with these as with other articles of scientific interest, the natives had too long been aware of the value of everything old to leave much chance of obtaining objects of value. Every known place had been ransacked for such things to sell to passing ships. One old man indeed was reported to have five tablets hidden in a cave, of which when he last visited it two—if I remember rightly—were found to have rotted away. We approached him with every inducement, moral and material, only to be met with a blank denial that he had any such possessions. Whether he lied or not will never be known, for he died shortly afterwards, and as is always the case in these circumstances his hoard was lost.

The pursuit of the hieroglyphics was a tantalizing one. The old people could all remember the time when they were a living part of their civilization, and had known intimately those who could make and interpret them; but even to touch them was "tabu" to the uninitiated, and with the death of the last professors, many of whom were carried away by the Peruvians, the knowledge of them expired. One old man is still alive who had begun to learn the art, but his hand had shaken so that he had given up the attempt. In most of the more important villages there had been a house set apart for their manufacture, where no women entered. Here the professors taught their pupils. They practised first on the outside stem or bark of the banana, and then were promoted to write on wood with a shark's tooth.

The tablets were of all sizes, some as much as 6 feet long, and as far as was known their contents varied; some were said to be prayers, and some a record of names. It was possible to secure a certain set of words, which was universally said to be those inscribed on the oldest and most important tablet. The natives who recited it had as much or rather as little knowledge of the meaning of the doggerel as we should have if asked to interpret some of the more mysterious of our nursery rhymes. Authority over the tablets rested in old days with the head of that section of the people known as the "Miru."

The islanders were divided into ten clans who were constantly at war, but no one of them had a chief or ariki save the Miru clan, which inhabited the northern coast. The Miru as a whole possessed certain supernatural powers. Skulls have been brought from Easter Island marked with designs whose significance was unknown. These belonged to members of the Miru clan, and as such had the invaluable property of making hens lay eggs. They were carefully set apart in consequence.

14: Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1917
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

The Ariki or chief of the Miru was not a leader in war nor the fountain of justice, nor even a priest; he was the great authority on the tablets. The last great chief "Gnaara" died about a year before the arrival of the Peruvians. He was said to be short and broad, very fair, but so heavily tattooed as to look dark.

At Anakena Bay on the northern coast, where tradition says the first landing took place, a great gathering was held every year. One old man, Te Haha, gave us a vivid description of the scene. He had himself been there as a boy as a sort of A.D.C. to the chief. Gnaara and his son sat on seats made of tablets. Before them in rows stood the professors of the great art, with an aisle down the centre; each man had his tablet, and was called on to read aloud. If he did not read correctly our friend Te Haha was directed by the chief to take away the offender.

What has been so far said on the subject refers to the sacred hieroglyphics only. We were fortunate enough to come across another kind of writing, of a similar nature but different both in form and intention. This was found on a paper in the village, and the signs were noted as dissimilar from those previously known. The paper was traced to a certain old man, Tomenico by name. He was suffering from incurable disease, confined to the leper colony, and of impaired memory. It was however worth while to make an effort. The first visit was a failure, but on the second and third, with a different native escort, things went better. Tomenico was seated outside his house and asked for a pencil and paper. He drew a number of signs similar to those on the paper, writing across the sheet, and then said the paper was not long enough. The line had to be continued direct; it could not go on the next line, so another sheet was supplied. Other lines went underneath it. To each symbol he then recited a set of words. There was no doubt as to the genuineness of the recitation. When he was stopped that the words might be taken down he was put out and had to begin again. It was more doubtful, however, whether the symbols had any connection with the words; they were apparently used more as the beads might be in a rosary. Two more visits were paid in the endeavour to get the system of writing, but he was then very ill and confined to his hut. Every means was tried, but little that was intelligible could be arrived at, and the effort had with deep regret to be abandoned. A fortnight later he died. Happily another old man in the village, though he had little knowledge of the hieroglyphics, had lived with Tomenico in his earlier years, and it was possible through him to get at their drift with comparative completeness and certainty. This is too long to go into on this occasion, but it may be briefly said that they dealt with minor events on the island, which were arranged in cycles of ten years.

While knowledge of the statues has almost disappeared, and detailed acquaintance with the tablets is following in its wake, there was found to have existed yet another cult, with regard to which, living memory is still strong and clear. This is the ceremony connected with the bird-cult or

15:Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1919
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

FIG. 78.

● 622

AHU PARO,
With image which was the last to be overthrown.

Foreground.—Hillock, traditionally utilised for placing the crown in position.
Distance.—Eastern Headland, with three cones, from which Spanish sovereignty was proclaimed in 1770.

[facing p. 197]

15;Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1919
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

411 used both as a spear and as a javelin. A site is pointed out near Anakena, where a man throwing down hill killed another at about thirty-five yards. The art of making these mataa is, of course, practically extinct, but one old man, commonly known as "Hé" (fig. 83) brought us some which he had manufactured himself for the Expedition, and which were fairly well wrought.

522 With the exception of the Miru, of which more will be said, there were no chiefs nor any form of government; any man who was expert in war became a leader. The warfare consisted largely of spasmodic and isolated raids; an aggrieved person
726 gathered together his neighbours and descended on the offenders. It is related incidentally that one man, going along the south coast, "found war going on," one set of men having blocked up another in a cave. Another story is told of six men, called Gwaruti-mata-keva, of the clan Tupahotu, who lived in a cave in a certain hillock on the south coast, known as Toa-toa. They went round in a boat to Hanga Piko, stole fish, and returned rapidly to their cave. A hundred men from Hanga Piko then came overland to punish the robbery, and made a fire of grass before the cave in which the men lay hidden. When the attackers assumed that the enemy were all dead from suffocation, they went into the cave; but those within had buried their faces in holes scraped in the earth, and when the men from Hanga Piko entered, they arose and slew the whole hundred.
575 A more interesting fact came out incidentally in connection with this gang of Toa-toa, connecting them with the secret societies found elsewhere in the Pacific. They were, it was said, in the habit of going about after dark with their faces painted red, white, and black, and visiting houses, where they declared they were gods, and demanded food, which the inhabitants accordingly gave them. The fraud, however, finally came to light when one day a man, who was travelling with his servant, saw them washing paint off their faces, "so they knew that they had deceived the people, and the people gathered together and killed them."

727 In these internecine fights fire was very generally set to the enemy's dwellings. ("He often burnt houses," a young man said, pointing to an older one, and the impeachment was not denied.) The ahu, too, were raided and bodies burnt, which
764 seems to be the cause of the burnt bones recorded by certain travellers; there is no reason to suppose there was cremation on sacrifice on Easter Island.

15:Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1919
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

to a relative, who was the father of an old man from whom we managed to obtain it. When the time came to hand it over to us, the late owner began to cling to it affectionately, and say that he "wept much at the thought of its going to England"; as, however, the bargain had already been completed, we remained obdurate, and at the time of writing Hotu resides with Ko Tori at the Royal College of Surgeons.

The Miru were unique in other ways; they were the only group which had a headman or chief, who was known as the "ariki," or sometimes as the "ariki-mau," the great chief, to distinguish him from the "ariki-paka," a term which seems to have been given to all other members of the clan.[1] The office of ariki-mau was hereditary, and he was the only man who was obliged to marry into his own clan. It was customary when he was old and feeble that he should resign in favour of his son. There are various lists of the succession of chiefs, counted from the first immigrant, Hotu-matua. The oldest lists are those given by Bishop Jaussen[2] and by Admiral Lapelin,[3] which contain some thirty names. Thomson gives one with fifty-seven. In our day there was admittedly much uncertainty about the sequence, but the number was said to be thirty,[4] and two independent lists were obtained. All these categories differ, though they contain many of the same names, particularly at the beginning and end.

The last man to fill the post of ariki with its original dignity was Ngaara; he died shortly before the Peruvian raid, and becomes a very real personage to anyone inquiring into the history of the island. He was short, and very stout, with white skin, as had all his family, but so heavily tattooed as to look black. He wore feather hats of various descriptions, and was hung round both back and front with little wooden ornaments, which jingled as he walked. When our authorities can remember him his wife was dead and he lived with his son Kaimokoi. It was not permitted to see them eat, and no one but the servants was allowed to enter the house. His headquarters were at Anakena, the cove on the island where, according to tradition, the first canoe landed.

[1] Evidence on this head was rather contradictory, but no Miru could be found, male or female, to whom the title was not given.
[2] "L'Ile de Paques," M. Tépano Jaussen, *Bulletin Géographique*, 1893, p. 241.
[3] *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*, vol. xxxv, p. 109.
[4] Thirty is, however, a very favourite number: cf. the folk-tales.

15:Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1919
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

614 the first canoe landed. (It is unique in having a sandy shore, and
622 is surrounded by an amphitheatre of low hills. Behind it to the
792 west rises the high central ground of the island, beyond it, on the other side, is the eastern plain ;) it (thus) approximately terminates the strip of land held by the Miru (fig. 97). There are now at Anakena the remains of six ahu, a few statues, and the foundations of various houses. Ngaara held official position for the whole island, but he was neither a leader in war, nor the fount of justice, nor even a priest ; he can best be described as the custodian of certain customs and traditions. The act most nearly approaching a religious ceremony was conducted under his auspices, though not by him personally. In time of drought
302 he sent up a younger son and other ariki-paka to a hill-top to
782 pray for rain : they were painted on one side red, on the other
784 black with a stripe down the centre. These prayers were addressed to Hiro, said to be the god of the sky, a supernatural being in whom we seem getting nearer the idea of a divinity, as distinct from a spirit of the dead, and of whom we would gladly have learnt more than could be discovered.

789 The ariki-paka had other duties besides praying for rain ; they
622 made " maru," or strings of white feathers tied on to sticks, which
614 they placed among the yams to make them grow. They buried a certain small fish among the sugar-canes to bring up the plants,
792 and when a koro was being held, and it was consequently particularly desirable that the fowls should thrive, an ariki-paka painted a design in red, known as the " rei-miro," below the door of the chicken-house (fig. 115).

Te Haha, the " social success," who was an ariki-paka in the entourage of Ngaara, gave graphic descriptions of life at Anakena when he was a boy. If, he said, people wanted chickens, they applied to the Ariki-mau, who sent him with maru, and his visits were always attended with satisfactory results.

262 Ngaara never consumed rats, and one day, coming across the boy watching rats being cooked, he was extremely angry, for it transpired that, if Te Haha had eaten them, his power for producing chickens would have diminished ; presumably because he would have imbibed ratty nature, which was disastrous to eggs and young chickens. The Ariki, however, made himself useful to him on occasion. The younger Miru had long hair reaching to his heels, and one day, when he was asleep in a cave, some one cut it

15:Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1919
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

off. So he went to Ngaara, who told him to bring ten coconuts, which he broke and put in pieces of the sacred tree, "ngau-ngau"; the spell blasted the offender, who promptly died. Ngaara himself attended the inauguration of any house of importance. The wooden lizards were put formally on each side of the entrance to the porch, and the Ariki and an ivi-atua, who "went with him like a tatane," were the first to eat in the new dwelling: only the houses with stone foundations were thus honoured. The Ariki was visited one month in the year by "all people," who brought him the plant known as pua on the end of sticks, put the pua into his house, and retired backwards.

He also held receptions on other occasions, seated on the broken-off head of an old image, which was pointed out on a grassy declivity among the hills behind Anakena; these were special occasions for criticising the tattoo. Those who were well tattooed were sent to stand on one hill slope, whilst those who were badly done were sent to another; the Ariki and men behind him laughed contemptuously at the latter (which, as the process was permanent and could not be altered, seems slightly unkind). These receptions were also attended by men who had made boats, and by twins, to whom the Ariki gave a "royal name." Such children were not, as in so many countries, considered unlucky, but it was necessary that at birth they should live in a house apart, otherwise they would not survive. This superstition still exists. Shortly before our arrival a woman in the village had given birth to twins, for whom a little grass house was put up; another woman went in and brought them out to the mother to nurse.

The Script

Closely connected with the subject of the Miru clan is that of the method of writing. While we can only catch glimpses of the image cult through the mists of antiquity, the tablets, known as "kohau-rongo-rongo,"[1] were an integral part of life on the island within the memory of men not much past middle age (fig. 98). The highest authority on them was the ariki Ngaara. It was tantalising to feel how near we were to their translation and yet how far. Te Haha had begun to learn to write, but found that his hand shook too much, besides, as he explained, Ngaara

[1] Sometimes called kohe-rongo-rongo.